

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-15 SP-02 PM-05 NSCE-00 SSO-00

CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 INRE-00 /047 W

-----027188 292013Z /72

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FM AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 083

INFO AMEMBASSY LIMA

AMEMBASSY QUITO

AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

C O N F I D E N T I A L LA PAZ 2535

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, BL

SUBJECT: LIKELY POSTPONEMENT OF BOLIVIAN ELECTIONS

1. LAST NIGHT (MARCH 28) I MET WITH A DISCOURAGED JUAN PEREDA FRONT-RUNNING CANDIDATE FOR PRESIDENT IN JULY ELECTIONS. I TOLD HIM I KNEW HE HAD MET WITH BANZER TWICE YESTERDAY, THAT PEREDA HAD MADE PREPARATIONS FOR AN EARLY TRIP TO MIAMI, AND THAT IN GENERAL THE SITUATION WAS RAPIDLY GETTING TURBULENT.

2. PEREDA TOLD ME BANZER WAS ON THE VERGE OF POSTPONING JULY ELECTIONS. HE HAD CALLED A MEETING WITH HIS MILITARY COMMANDERS FOR MONDAY, APRIL 3, TO MAKE A FINAL DECISION. THE CASE WAS BEING MADE TO BANZER THAT POSTPONEMENT WAS REQUIRED BECAUSE
1) THE MILITARY WAS NOT SUPPORTING PEREDA, 2) HIS CIVILIAN COALITION WAS TOO NARROW AND, THEREFORE, 3) IF ELECTED HE COULD NOT GOVERN EFFECTIVELY. PEREDA SAID ALL OF THIS WAS MISCONVEIVED BUT IT WAS BEYOND HIS POWER TO CHANGE THE MILITARY'S OR BANZER'S MIND.

3. IF THE MILITARY AND BANZER DECIDED TO POSTPONE ELECTIONS, PEREDA SAID HE WOULD WITHDRAW HIS CANDIDACY AND RETIRE FROM PUBLIC LIFE. HE WAS FED UP WITH BANZER'S VACILLATION WHICH
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CONTINUALLY UNDERCUT HIM. PEREDA HAD GOTTEN THE US VISA THAT DAY SO HE COULD LEAVE THE COUNTRY FOR A LONG REST IMMEDIATELY AFTER HIS WITHDRAWAL FROM THE CAMPAIGN.

4. I ASKED WHY PEREDA THOUGH THIS STRONG RESISTANCE TO HIS CANDIDACY HAD PERSISTED. HE SAID FIRST, BANZER'S CONTINUING VACILLATION INVITED DOUBTS FROM ALL SIDES. SECOND, HE, PEREDA,

HAD DECLINED TO BY ANYONE'S PUPPET. AND THIRD, SOME MILITARY MEN OPPOSED PEREDA'S EFFORT TO STAKE OUT A POSITION IN THE CENTER TO CENTER-LEFT (I.E., I ASSUME, LEAVE THE RIGHT-WING FSB BEHIND). PEREDA SAID HE WAS NOT A RIGHTIST AND WOULD NOT RUN A RIGHTIST CAMPAIGN OR GOVERNMENT.

5. PEREDA WOULD NOT COMMENT ON WHAT FORM OF GOVERNMENT WOULD CONTINUE IF ELECTIONS WERE POSTPONED EXCEPT TO SAY HE FEARED IT WOULD BE A HARD-LINE ONE. PEREDA SAID HIS INFLUENCE ON THE SITUATION IN THE NEXT DAYS WAS MINIMAL. BANZER AND THE ARMY WOULD CALL THE FINAL DECISION. THE ONLY CIVILIAN HE THOUGH WOULD INFLUENCE BANZER NOW WAS MARIO MERCADO, THE AMBITIOUS MAYOR OF LA PAZ, WHO OPPOSES ELECTIONS. (MERCADO, A PRIVATE MINE OWNER, IS ALSO THE ONE TELLING BANZER THE TIN PRICE WILL CONTINUE TO FALL AS A RESULT OF GSA SALES PLANS, PUTTING BOLIVIA INTO AN ECONOMIC BIND.)

6. ON MARCH 29, RUMORS OF PEREDA'S IMMINENT WITHDRAWAL ARE ALREADY WIDESPREAD. THE DECISION PEREDA SEES FOR APRIL 3 MAY WELL FALL MUCH SOONER.
BOEKER

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